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DEAN WEBSTER TALKS OF EMERGING CHURCH

CHATTANOOGA -- "The treasure we have received within the Christian tradition challenges us to dialogue with the God of the future," said the Very Rev. Alan B. Webster to the bishops of the Episcopal Church at their annual meeting here at the Read House, Oct. 2-9.

Speaking on the topic, "Ministry in an Emerging Church," the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London said that in the evolving Church of the 1980s, new ministries will be seen.

Dean Webster took the texts for his five sermons, delivered during the noon Eucharist each working day of the bishops' meeting, from St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthian Church, with illustrations from contemporary history. The illustrative personalities included an artist, an author and a bishop.

In speaking on the "treasure in earthen vessels," he defined the treasure as people -- those around us and we ourselves -- who are encased in breakable vessels of the incarnate God. "The old vessels -- ecclesiastical, political, cultural -- are breaking," he said, which reveals that the power of the Church belongs to God and not to us.

On other days he spoke about Paul's revelation of what it means to be poor but making others rich, to have nothing but possessing everything, to be bewildered but never at our wit's end, to be struck down but not left to die.

Sometimes there are no words to help us, he said. "Words alone can fail. . . . Where there is no word, there comes a person. Thank God for people, the holy common people of God, who are God's words to us, so that we can continue to say our prayers, be ourselves and get on with it."

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